

HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE

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News from the **CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION**

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Legislative and Budget Priorities for Educational Opportunity, 2002

The California Postsecondary Education Commission, as the State's higher education coordinating body, supports legislative and budgetary initiatives that address educational opportunity for all Californians and opposes such initiatives that reinforce existing or proposed inequality of educational opportunity.

The Commission believes that the best interests of the State as well as students are served by policies which ensure that the economic and social advantages gained by receiving a higher education are made available to all students, regardless of residency status, ethnicity, geographic location or economic standing.

The Commission has identified a public agenda around four primary themes that require the attention of all Californians and their elected representatives in planning for the State's long-term needs. Although broad in nature, they encompass key issues that will likely be of high interest for the Legislature and other policy-making bodies. The focus of these priorities is the manner in which the State can best address the critical issues facing California postsecondary education and to advise policy makers on the means by which they can continue to provide high-quality instruction for California students and ensure the current and future economic vitality of the State. The four primary themes of the Commission's public agenda are presented below:

1. Growth

More students than ever, with increased variation in their backgrounds, will seek admission to California colleges and universities. Within this decade, the State can expect an enrollment demand of over 714,000 new students in its public colleges and universities and up to 65,000 in the independent college and university sector. This enrollment growth occurs differentially with respect to geographic location, ethnicities, economic standing and academic preparation. California should enact policies to ensure that equal educational opportunities exist for all students, regardless of their background or location.

2. Preparation of students

Equal opportunity for all students to gain a quality postsecondary

education is not a reality in California. The State should have policies that ensure that all Californians have access to educational opportunity that will mitigate inequitable differences in family background. This responsibility lies with K-12 education as well as higher education. Institutions of higher education should work with elementary and secondary schools in encouraging all students, regardless of whether they choose a traditional university experience or vocational training, to prepare for living productive lives and contributing to the economic vigor and cultural enhancement of California.

3. Bachelor-degree production

Recently, the issue has been raised of whether or not California should produce more holders of bachelor degrees. The State's current bachelor-degree production is lower than the national average. At the same time, the proportion of adults in California holding a bachelor or higher degree is above the national average. This is due to the number of Californians who attain a bachelor degree outside of the state. This issue may warrant greater attention to determine what if any effect this phenomenon has on California's economy and contribution to its own economic development.

4. Workforce development/economic vitality

One of California's primary responsibilities to its residents is to help them become self-sufficient contributors to society; inherent in such an expectation is adult literacy. Greater numbers of students are required to have stronger academic skills and increased workforce competencies in order to maximize their career and life-long learning opportunities. The State can fulfill this responsibility in a number of ways, including high school coursework, community college programs, private vocational training, adult literacy programs, Workforce Investment Act programs, and traditional university education.

California should encourage initiatives that support a shared, comprehensive and coherent system of workforce preparation programs that blend theory and applied learning throughout the curricula and leave no student unprepared for either the workplace and/or educational pursuits.

Legislative and budgetary issues

The four thematic areas outlined above represent a broad higher education agenda of educational opportunity for all Californians. As the Legislature returns for the second year of the session, it faces a number of higher education legislative and budgetary initiatives, many of which will have an effect on the Commission's agenda. Consequently, the Commission will concentrate its governmental relations efforts and influence on specific legislation and budget proposals in the following areas.

- 1. Financial Aid.** Financial aid opportunities should be available for all students demonstrating financial need. Necessary outreach activities should be implemented to ensure that every Californian is aware of the availability of financial aid. The State should continue to support financial aid grant programs recently enacted for resident students enrolling in the State's colleges and universities.
- 2. Transfer.** The successful transfer of community college students to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions is an important underpinning of the California Master Plan for Higher Education and should be among the highest priorities of the State's higher education systems. Community colleges are the primary point of access for education beyond high school for most Californians pursuing a higher education. As such, the Commission expects an increase in the number of students successfully transferring from a community college to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. Students from underrepresented groups and underserved areas of the State should be a primary focus of system initiatives to increase numbers of community college transfer students.

3. Student fees. California should advance and embrace a policy on student fees that is fair and equitable and calls for gradual, moderate and predictable increases if necessary. If student-fee increases must be imposed in the current fiscal environment, such increases should be limited to no more than 10 percent in the 2002-2003 academic year. We strongly urge the Administration and the Legislature to fully fund higher education before imposing any increase in student fees. In the event of unforeseen State funding reductions, the Commission will reconsider this policy position.

4. Technology. Technology is a substantial benefit in reducing the disparity of access by extending and sustaining high quality instruction for all students without regard to time or location, improving documentation of student learning, and providing lifelong learning opportunities for Californians with a variety of educational goals.

The State should facilitate the development of statewide funding priorities for technology in higher education and advise the Legislature and the governor on the recommended priorities as called for in Assembly Bill 1123, Chapter 467, Statutes of 2000. The State should provide funding for those priorities as needed.

5. Collaboration. State policies should encourage more collaborative efforts among institutions to maximize resources, reduce redundancy, and ensure that state general fund dollars and federal dollars are used effectively and efficiently for accommodating learners of all ages regardless of location. The Commission supports initiatives to develop and maintain a thoughtful and cohesive approach to a seamless relationship between and among California's public systems of higher education and in conjunction with workforce development programs, public schools and independent colleges and universities.

The Commission also supports initiatives that support increased regional capacity, cooperation, and programmatic alignment within a state-

wide context of addressing educational inequities for potential learners.

6. Joint Use of Classrooms and Buildings. Collaboration in the use of facilities should be one of the top priorities for capital outlay funding as California's higher education institutions attempt to accommodate the expected surge in enrollment demand. The State should provide incentives such as a set-aside of bond revenues to be used specifically for joint use facilities and collaborative education centers.

7. Accountability. The State should demonstrate accountability in serving the instructional needs of all eligible Californians, ensuring that programs are focused and efficiently implemented. In addition the Commission supports initiatives that increase management and fiscal flexibility for the State's public systems of higher education and opposes such initiatives that reduce or inhibit such flexibility.

The State should expect all components of higher education to provide information and data to the California Postsecondary Education Commission in a timely manner on higher education programs, activities, and initiatives as necessary for the Commission to undertake its statutory coordinating responsibilities.

Procedures for action on legislative and budget issues in 2002

Policy statement for action on legislative and budget issues in 2002

On December 13, 1976, the Commission adopted a policy perspective reflecting its processes, priorities, and procedures. At its meeting in February 2002, the Commission reaffirmed these procedures as they are reflected below.

In the performance of its duties and responsibilities, the Commission often has occasion to express its opinion on legislation and also to make recommendations with regard to legislation or matters under consideration by the Legislature or

governor. The procedures set forth below shall be followed with regard to legislative matters, including the State Budget.

1. The executive director of the Commission shall be responsible for reviewing all legislation relating to postsecondary education.
2. Legislation that has significant policy implications as determined by the Commission's adopted Legislative and Budget Priorities shall be referred to the Commission's Governmental Relations Committee for consideration and general policy recommendations. These recommendations shall be transmitted to the full Commission for its review and approval and shall serve as guidelines for developing positions on pending legislation.
3. Neutral positions will be taken on matters not affecting the Commission or postsecondary educational priorities of the Commission.
4. In the absence of specific policy guidelines established by the Commission, the executive di-

rector is authorized to communicate, in the Commission's name, with the Legislature or the governor on legislative matters.

5. No person shall represent the Commission in communications with the Legislature, the administration or the media unless the chair of the Commission or the executive director has expressly authorized such action.
6. To the extent that he or she deems it appropriate, the executive director may designate another representative to carry out these responsibilities, under his or her direction.
7. The Commission opposes legislation that would give it significant additional duties and responsibilities, short or long term, unless adequate funding to support those additional duties and responsibilities is provided.
8. The Commission shall seek to provide for representation on appropriate boards, committees, and task forces that may have an impact on the agency's priorities.